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AUTHOR Henderson, Algo D.; Henderson, Jean G.
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ABSTRACT

What are community colleges doing to help their students analyze social, economic, environmental, and political issues; become good citizens; live in a rapidly changing world; understand their heritage; discover their potentialities; refine their interests and goals; and achieve their optimum personal growth? These objectives provide a frame of reference for general education, a modern term that has replaced what was called liberal education in ancient times. A liberal education concerns itself primarily with the body of knowledge that encompasses historical perspective, cultural knowledge, a sense of values, intellectual development, and the ability to communicate with others. A historical sketch of general education reveals the transitions in thinking that have occurred. The classical liberal arts curriculum was replaced by the distribution plan, followed by survey courses, and the block-and-gap method. Alternatives included courses designed by faculty within their areas of interest, but oriented to cultural interests rather than to professional or vocational preparation and developmental plans comprehending both general and vocational education. Although there are no simple solutions to the problem of general education, the community college has the best opportunity to raise the general level of expectations, cultural undertaking, and values of all the people. (TP)

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# REVITALIZING GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Dr. Algo D. Henderson

Author and Former President of Antioch College

AND

Dr. Jean G. Henderson

Co-author of "Higher Education in America - Problems, Priorities and Prospects"

Submitted to the President of Montgomery College, Maryland,
for discussion at a forum held on May 22, 1978,
on the subject of
"Future Purposes, Content, and Formats
for the
General Education of Community College Students"

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# REVITALYZING GENERAL EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

By Algo D. Henderson and Jean G. Henderson

We are living in a time of crisis, filled with crucial issues. The armaments race, the uses and controls of nuclear energy, the continuing pollution of air and water, the unethical practices of multinational corporations, a loss of confidence in public officials, the cost of medical care, the persistence of unemployment and inflation is to mention a few of them. Our industrialized society, heretofore based upon abundant natural resources and the supremacy of monetary rewards, is exhausting those resources and has created a materialistic-oriented society. The social, economic, environmental, political, and intercultural/international problems that face us today are monumental.

What are the community colleges doing to help their students analyze these issues and prepare to deal with them?

Real democracy demands the general participation of citizens in the choice of those who govern and in determining the most desirable political and social courses of action. It is interesting to reflect upon the role of education in the United States in preparing its people for responsible citizenship. The Jacksonian revolution destroyed the monopoly of the privileged land-owning class in voting, and gave the franchise

to the common man also. However, the common people were illiterate; hence the founding of the public school system to teach them to read, write, and calculate. The academies were strictly college-preparatory programs, attended by the socially elite. With the advent of the public high schools, the way was opened for all boys and girls to get more general education and more systematic training in vocations. In the beginning the junior colleges gave only the first two years of the liberal arts colleges. Then they were transformed into general colleges for the whole population. It was the report of the President's Commission on Higher Education in 1947, during the Truman Administration, that set the stage for the widespread conversion of the junior college into the community college. Volume I of the report was devoted to the subject of educating all of the people, and in that education emphasizing general education. The emphasis was on assisting people to improve and enrich their lives, and to become responsible citizens. The complexity and comprehensiveness of political and social issues today demand a higher degree of knowledge ahan can be given in the elementary and secondary schools. And this education needs to occur at a higher level of personal maturity.

What are the community colleges doing to prepare their students to become good citizens?

The portrayal of issues such as those mentioned above highlights the fact that our society is faced with change, rapid change. College students should be prepared to compre-

hend more fully what is taking place and to participate in determining the course of change. They need, furthermore, to attain sufficient breadth in their specialized training to give them the vocational versatility necessary to cope with a changing world.

What are the community colleges doing to prepare their students to live in a rapidly changing world?

The present-day student wants to know his roots. From whence did he come? What has been his cultural heritage? It is the black student, kept in ignorance for so long, who has been the most vociferous in demanding that the colleges provide him with the means and the knowledge that will reveal to him his cultural heritage. He craves knowledge of his own history, art, literature. He wants an identity, a pride in his race, and a body of ideas through which to explore for a good life for himself and his people.

Knowledge is like a stream. It began with a mere trickle, but as time passed it became more and more swollen with additions. Each discovery, an important accretion in itself, laid the foundation for still more discoveries. Thus atomic energy was not unfolded until a succession of discoveries revealed the presence of the atom, its nature and composition. Our civil liberties were not suddenly created by Jefferson, Madison, and their contemporaries. The various liberties were the product of numerous acts of the British Parliament, passed during the centuries when the concept of democracy was being evolved.

Education today can begin, not from scratch, but from this accumulated storehouse of knowledge.

What are the community colleges doing to bring before their students an understanding of their heritage and of the stream of accumulated wisdom gained from the experience of men and women in the past?

The student gains an identity from knowing his roots; but he also seeks to know himself better. Witness the extent to which young people engage in meditation as a means of developing mind and body control. Many of them seek to become self sufficient, rather than to depend upon the establishment in earning a living. Some young people engage in group encounters to get better understanding of themselves and of other people. Some return to nature and adopt life styles emphasizing natural foods and physical exercise to find a better life.

A student is a physical, emotional, and intellectual being. He needs to know his capabilities, his talents, his limitations. At college age, he has many choices to make, selections that will affect his life style, his occupation, his social activities, his physical well-being. Out of his study, reflections, meditations, he will acquire motivations, attitudes, aspirations, goals. And from his experiences he will gain skills--physical, emotional and intellectual. Individual development takes place in many ways and from a variety of experiences, but it is through the systematic processes of education that the student has the best chance to develop his

brain power, to understand his psychological and emotional makeup, and to find the best answers to good physical and mental health.

What are the community colleges doing to assist their students to discover their potentialities, to refine their interests and goals, and to achieve their optimum personal growth?

The several questions we have asked, based as they are on social and individual needs that are not fully met by vocational education, provide a frame of reference for general education.

In the effort to define what general education is all about, there are other frames of reference. Among them are the efforts of the liberal arts colleges to define their role in education. Liberal education has concerned itself primarily with the body of knowledge that should be possessed by every well-educated man. One concept of this is passing down the cultural heritage from one generation to the next. The purpose of this has been to conserve the knowledge that has accumulated from the past and to give individuals the benefit of the wisdom it contains, but also to provide people with a common set of values. Society might disintegrate, and men destroy the civilization they have built, if their thinking did not cluster around common goals. From this point of view, McGrath has provided a definition of general education as "...that which prepares students for the common life of their

time and kind, regardless of their calling, including that fund of knowledge and beliefs, and those habits of language and thought which characterize and stabilize a social group."[1]

Until recently the cultural heritage meant the culture that stems from the Greek and Roman periods and received fuller expression in Western Europe. It has been the culture influenced by the teachings of the Jewish and Christian religions. The most common image of this is the white Anglo-Saxon culture. Now, however, we are beginning to realize that western/white supremacy in the world is at an end; and its culture has lost some of its relevance in a world where all people live as neighbors, and where non-white cultures also transmit treasures and values of significance in our lives. Admittedly western civilization has made remarkable contributions toward human development, intellectually and in industrial prowess; also in art, literature, science, human freedoms, and social organization. In the search for values, however, we need to examine all of human experience, whether Western,Oriental, African, or other.

The passing on of the cultural heritage, on the other hand, can be inhibiting to human progress. The student through the study of history, art, and literature, acquires social attitudes that restrict his thinking about social problems. This can clearly be seen in the status of women. In China, women in the past had their feet bound, in South Asia they were kept in purdah, and in the West,

they have been unequal partners of men. They have been the victims of male chauvinism, and the maintenance of male-oriented laws and occupations. Western literature, art, and social customs have helped keep women in their place by portraying women as being subordinate to men. This is the reason for Women's Studies. They provide women students with a sense of individual identity, and an escape from the socialization they have received at home and in school. Thus women's studies have become an important part of the general education of women. This shows how the past needs to be examined critically and tested in the light of present day research and experience.

To make effective judgments one needs a sense of values. A philosopher once remarked, wisely we think, that values can best be understood by comparing various antitheses, such as right and wrong, beauty and ugliness, honesty and dishonesty. Of course, one must have some kind of orientation to these opposites in order to make judgments about them. A child, for example, is not born with intuitive knowledge of what is good, true and beautiful. He must be taught aesthetic appreciations and moral perceptions. However, various cultures have differed in their experiences, so the objective should be to search all of human experience in the effort to identify what that experience can teach us about the behavior that best advances the human race.

Another traditional objective of the liberal arts college

has been to discipline the mind. It is clear that our brains can be developed to retain information and to increase our power to think. Students can acquire the ability to observe more precisely, to collate and analyze facts, to solve problems, to generalize from the specific to novel situations. They can also learn how to engage in abstract thinking. Although community college students are not being trained to be scholars, some of them will become scholars and all of them can improve their skills in thinking. The well-disciplined mind is not a product of particular courses, but instead is an outcome that depends on how all instruction is given by the faculty and all learning is experienced by the students.

Liberal education assumes liberalized learning. What is a liberated person? One is liberated if he or she possesses the tools of learning and the techniques of action: the ability to verbalize, to calculate, to analyze and synthesize, to create, to organize, and to administer; they possess or can acquire the knowledge necessary for a course of action. Persons are not free who are handicapped with unnecessary psychological inhibitions, who are victims of preventable diseases, who harbor irrational prejudices against persons of differing views or other cultures or races, or who practice religious bigotry. People become liberated as they learn how to organize into social groups to secure for all persons such advantages as adequate physical comfort, health, education, economic justice, and leisure time for cultural pursuits.[2]

This model of the liberated person may not be fully attainable in a college, especially in a two-year program, but some model of an educated person should orient our thinking about the purposes of higher education. As Phenix has said: "Human beings are characterized by a few basic types of functioning. They use symbols, they abstract and generalize, they create and perceive interesting objects, they relate to each other personally, they make judgments of good and evil, they re-enact the past, they seek the ultimate, and they comprehensively analyze, evaluate, and synthesize...They are the foundation of all civilized existence."[3]

From this analysis of the contributions of the liberal arts colleges we derive the concept of breadth and depth that every educated person should attain; and certain goals of significance in defining the purposes of general education, namely historical perspective, cultural knowledge, a sense of values, intellectual development, and the ability to communicate with others.

One additional concept of education, emphasized by pragmatic philosophy and implemented through progressive education, is relevant in defining the purposes of general education. This is the concept of the whole man. When we speak of student growth and development we are referring to the whole person, his intelligence, his emotions, and his physical being. We refer also to the need of a student to learn how to earn a living and at the same time live a good life. It is a characteristic of a democratic society that its members work and also

participate as members of a community. They are concerned with their individual welfare and with human welfare in general. Thus a college becomes responsible for assisting the student in his all-round development, and in both his vocational and his general education.

An historical sketch of general education will assist us to see the transitions in thinking that have occurred, and how the various threads we have been discussing merge as we attempt to define purposes and make plans today.

General education is a modern term that has replaced what was called liberal education in ancient times. Liberal education had its origin in classical Greece. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle taught the liberal arts to free men, whose activities were very different from their slaves. Free men could study and become well-rounded in man's physical, intellectual, esthetic, and moral qualities. This knowledge was organized into seven liberal arts: logic, grammar, and rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. These subjects became known as the trivium and the quadrivium and became the foundation for further study in philosophy and theology. During the middle ages, the liberal arts were discouraged by the Christian Church, but were resusitated during the Renaissance and became the new Humanism in the medieval university. It was upon this base that liberal arts colleges in America were built, coming by way of England. Modeled mainly after Emmanuel College, Cambridge, the curriculum was

a compact and fixed course of study. Lectures were given in Latin and Greek and hence students had to master these subjects before entering college.[4] Although classical education came under attack as too rigid and unsuitable to a work-oriented democracy, the required liberal arts curriculum had tenacious supporters in many American colleges for well over 200 years. In 1828, for example, Yale University issued a report defending her classical studies as disciplining and furnishing the mind by expanding its powers and storing it with knowledge.

Eventually, however, because of the rapid growth of scientific and technical knowledge and the philosophies of pragmatism and laissez-faire, the standard college curriculum was brought under criticism. The classical liberal arts could no longer be considered the complete core of knowledge for the educated person. When Harvard lent its prestige to the establishment of electives in the college curriculum, promoted so enthusiastically under President Charles Eliot after 1869, it meant the end of the former required classics.[5] The only contemporary survivor is the great books plan. Whatever merit this plan may have as a dominant element in the curriculum, it is inapplicable to the community college.

But what was to replace the classical curriculum? What would become the modern core of knowledge that citizens in a democracy needed? The enthusiasm for electives gave birth to new subjects by the hundreds, while requirements diminished to one or two courses in the freshman year at most institutions

of higher learning. Students were largely able to determine their own course of study for the bachelor's degree. But then the pendulum began to swing back. By 1900 complaints were raised by students and faculty that there was no unity in higher education--studies were a series of discrete and unrelated courses. When the elective system had fragmented the curriculum into so many specializations that its integrative characteristics were lost, Harvard again led the way in devising the concentration and distribution plan.[6] The undergraduate curriculum naturally divides into divisions of the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences. Under this plan, all students were required to take a distribution of courses within these divisions. The aim was two-fold: to assure that the student would obtain a breadth of knowledge and to introduce him to new knowledge. The first purpose was intended to guard against the graduation of students, who, however competent in a narrow field, would not be well educated in the liberal sense. The other purpose was to expose the student early in his college study to a range of subject matter so that he would have a wider choice in the selection of a major area of concentration. Both of these purposes have considerable merit. The distribution plan is widely used among the colleges. However, it has some shortcomings. Where the distribution requirements are highly specific they impose on each student courses that are supposed to be good for him to learn but in which he does not see any relevance to his education. Thus

the factor of personal motivation, so important in learning, is absent. Furthermore, the courses are apt to be the introductory courses in each field. Their design may be excellent as the beginning course in a sequence within the specialization, but not appropriate to the purposes of general education. When the courses are not specifically identified, the student may select courses with titles that attract him, but with content that has been planned with the sequence in mind. The alternative for him is to choose courses that have a reputation as an easy way to earn the necessary credit.

In an effort to overcome these problems, many institutions organized survey courses. Each course surveyed a broad area or knowledge, again the humanities, the social sciences, and the sciences, for the benefit of the general student. At one time, the University of Chicago had one of the best programs of this type because the faculty had carefully worked out the objectives, chosen the desired content, and designed examinations that were based upon the objectives. To get a bird's eye view of an area, such as the physical sciences, at first glance seems highly commendable. However, the scope of coverage is so vast that it leads to superficial treatment. It is not possible under the survey plan to examine any aspect in depth. Many teachers would describe a succession of fragments but fail to present the area as an integrated whole. This has been especially true when a committee of professors taught the course. At Antioch College, for example, a course was

devised called "Matter and Energy", after the Einstein equation, and arrangements were made for a faculty member from each of the departments of chemistry, physics, and geology to teach it. The course failed, however, because each instructor gave in miniature an introductory course in his technical field. Antioch did not succeed in creating a science course for non-technical students until a teacher was employed who had written his dissertation, not on a tern in Lake Huron, but on concepts of science that can be comprehended by the general student.

The students came to the survey type of course with uneven preparation. For some, their high school study exceeded the content of the survey. These students might be permitted to waive, or even receive credit, when through examination they could demonstrate the desired achievement. This corrected one deficiency, but the other objections to the survey method remained. Over the years, this once popular approach to general education lost its appeal and its validity.

A variant from the distribution and the survey plans is the block-and-gap method. The principle of requiring each student to attain breadth of knowledge was retained. However, cognizance was taken of the impossibility of trying to impart all of knowledge to everybody. Each student was required to take courses beyond his immediate interest but which would penetrate a specific topic in some depth. In doing so, the relationship with the field as a whole could be examined and

hence the student would be given a degree of integration. In this plan, the student would take several blocks of knowledge, each from a separate area, but with gaps that would take account of what he already knew or, on the other hand, could later be filled in as he saw the need to do so. The block-and-gap plan has advantages, assuming that the courses are designed with general education objectives in mind.

Another plan of general education has been to encourage faculty to design courses within their areas of interest, but oriented to cultural interests rather than to professional or vocational preparation. Having in mind the old saying that it is easy to lead a horse to water but difficult to make it drink, it was assumed that not much learning would take place unless the student desired to learn. Consequently, no requirements were imposed on any student. Instead the faculty endeavored to persuade each student of the value to him in getting a cultural as well as a technical education. With courses especially designed for the purpose and with widespread commitment by the faculty to the objectives of general education, it was assumed that many, if not most, of the students would leave college with breadth as an important component of their education. It can be reasoned that under any required system, some students leave college with fresh perspectives and greater wisdom, but that many others, perhaps most, retain only enough information to pass their courses and then let it drift away from their lives. To the extent

that this is true, it seems probable that the net residue from the efforts to assure breadth of learning is greater under a voluntary plan than a required one, assuming a concerted faculty effort to open new doors and vistas for the students.

Because of the leadership given by Harvard to the efforts to define general education, we should note that its faculty once again is in the midst of revising their program.[7] The central aim is to graduate a well-educated person. Again the two elements, breadth and depth of learning are adopted as goals. Although the preliminary report discards the distribution plan, the recommendations nevertheless stipulate requirements of some seven to ten courses that must be chosen from designated breadth areas, the courses to be designed with general education objectives, rather than the field of concentration in mind. The program is to be supervised by special faculty committees and not by the specialized departments.

All of these plans are designed to provide cultural breadth, an important element in education that must be emphasized. No general education is complete without it. None of the plans, however, encompass all of the objectives described earlier. Intellectual interests are being aroused and some knowledge of history, art, literature, and the social and natural sciences acquired; but as previously noted, the mere accretion of cultural information and ideas may leave the

student indoctrinated and uncritical. He may not be at all perceptive about cultural change, or the directions for change. His cultural education therefore must include criticism; an ability to reason about the significance of past human achievements as they relate to further human progress. The plans often overlook the emotional and physical growth of each student.

With these criticisms in mind, some educators advocate a developmental plan[8] of education comprehending both general and vocational education. The focus is on the individual and the changes in him during the time he is enrolled in college. If any education is to take place, it must occur within the student. He must begin from wherever he is at the moment and proceed with his learning from there. Also, if he is to live a more satisfying and complete life in the future, he must begin to do so in the present. The assimilation of the wisdom he is gaining is ideally accompanied by learning to apply skills with which to use his increased knowledge. Attitudes have to be reconstructed to conform with his new perceptions and perspectives. And he must be exposed to experiences that will assist him in forming new habits of action. General education is sometimes contrasted with liberal education by pointing out that liberal education is primarily concerned with the acquisition of cultural knowledge, whereas general education places the emphasis on the functions of living--assisting the student in his development as a person and as

a member of the community.

In the developmental concept of education, the student's experiences become an important ingredient. It is obvious that if a student is to learn to type, to play a musical instrument, or to do a chemical analysis, he must type, play, or do analyses respectively. In similar manner the skills of community participation, of solving problems, of coordinating mind and body, are derived from activities that involve training in these skills. Changes in attitudes are more apt to take place if the student can feel the effect of changes in his own life or in his relationships to others. Changes in attitudes can result in new habits, but a habit is not a habit until it becomes assimilated through repeated action.

Change can be induced through experiential education. John Dewey first pointed to experience as a highly significant element in education. He warned, however, that experience can be educative or miseducative.[9] One test is whether the result of the experience is social or antisocial. Another is whether it is conducive to good health and well-being, or is dissipative of body and mind. The random experiences that take place on a college campus may be either educative or miseducative. For example, in producing future citizens, the political activities on a campus may teach the students all of the dirty tricks of power politics and have more influence on their behavior than do the courses in political science. To overcome this hit-or-miss effect, the experiences of students need to

be directed, directed toward achieving the objectives that are defined by the institution. If the campus press is consistent with general education objectives, the latter will be achieved in larger measure.

Experience may take many forms. Interrelating the study at the college with experience on jobs is one form. Many community colleges have work-study programs, but directed toward technical education or to earn expenses while in college. However, the experience on the job need not be so confined. The job can be a station from which the student explores his environment and his community; by so doing he is learning to interrelate his role as an earner with his role as a citizen. He is also observing contemporary society as a basis for understanding and applying the wisdom of the past.

Some colleges arrange for their students to participate in community studies and projects. One of the best examples of this is at Antioch College, Columbia, Maryland. In this program the college has achieved a high interrelationship between the off-campus experience and the study at the college. The experience is a part of the course of study. Outcomes are an insight into human ecology, into the functioning of a community, plus the acquisition of some skills of community participation.

The college campus is itself a laboratory in education. Students learn from their peers and from campus activities. One of the problems is to guide this learning in positive

ways for individual and social development.

In a way, experiential learning is an expansion of a technique used by many teachers who assign projects, surveys, or field studies as a requirement in their courses. It can serve the purposes of both special and general education. For example, when through field study a student is taught to observe birds so that he can describe their size, structure, coloration, behavior, and habitat, he learns how scientists identify and classify birds, plants and animals; but he may also derive a comprehension of wild life and beauty in nature in relation to man's environment. If the teacher confines himself to teaching scientific classification, he will be training a technician or future scientist. If he uses the project to achieve also the broader objectives, he will add an enriching dimension to the student's life.

Experiential education also encompasses laboratory experiments, library projects, and discussions directed toward intensive individual and group thinking. In each case the student is an active participant and not a passive listener. For example, in teaching students how to think, it is necessary that the student do more than listen to lectures on the subject. He must engage in systematic analysis and synthesis; he must learn the techniques and understand the consequences of inductive and deductive reasoning. He must learn how to integrate thought and action. Projects of various kinds result in written reports or theses, excellent media for

learning skills of communication.[10]

The objectives for general education that we have been describing are very broad. They are life-time goals. In a sense they comprehend all of education, general and specialized. The ability to think clearly and accurately, for example, is an aim that should permeate every course and every experience in college. The development of one's social consciousness, the acquisition of skills of communication, the relationship of one's knowledge to one's style of living--these and other objectives can best be achieved if the whole college maintains them as a frame of reference, a pervasive philosophy. The college period should be a vital, all-embracing experience in the development of the whole person.

An advantage to courses containing intrinsic general education objectives is that they can be kept vital and timely and are hence more lasting sectors of the curriculum. Some community college departments of education and social sciences are experiencing shortages in enrollments except in those courses with general education value and appeal that reach beyond departmental lines.

The methods we have described do not supply any one way to achieve the objectives. As noted, there has been little agreement on which method is the most successful or which method accomplishes its purposes best. The drive toward perfection is evident in the numerous plans that have been designed, tried, and discarded. They are constantly being

changed or re-worked. They also confirm the difficulty of finding a model to put into action. The only program that has had longevity is one that requires breadth of knowledge, generally associated with the liberal arts and sciences.

In view of the heterogeneous student body in a community college it is not practical to require a sequential package of courses. The student who expects to transfer to a four-year college fulfills the requirements of that college or is penalized at the time of transfer. However, his courses usually can be arranged to give him some breadth. It is better to do this than to anticipate upper level courses in his major department. Since 53% of the undergraduate program for an Associate of Arts degree, nation-wide, is in general education, according to Blackburn[11], presumably it is in a spread of cultural courses.

The student in a technician-training program, dental technology, for example, has to qualify as a practitioner by becoming licensed; this sets limits on his options. Nevertheless, it is important that persons in the health fields have a good perception of human needs and a broad outlook on life.

The adult who enrolls for charcoal drawing or typewriting wants these particular courses. He would not enroll in them if he were required to take a course in general education also. However, a college can offer cultural courses that will entice adults to enroll.

These problems need not be elaborated since they are

well known. But the limitations imposed by these conditions make it all the more important to infuse the courses in all departments with objectives of general education.

The conclusion from this analysis is that there is no simple solution to the problem of general education in the community college. As confirmation of this, Blackburn in his recent study could not find any model around which the community college programs would cluster.[12]

What then can a community college do in a curriculum in general education? The answer is to approach the problem from the viewpoint of the objectives that the student will find desirable rather than subject matter that is deemed to be good for him. These should be sufficiently comprehensive to achieve results of the type we have posed earlier, but with sufficient flexibility in the requirements so that the motivations of the students will be harnessed and that each individual can be accommodated in relation to his stage of learning. The aim is to produce enough change in the individual, his perceptions of himself, his socialization, his skills in thinking, and his ability to couple thought and action, to give him a bridge to an improved way of life. Dedicated college teachers endeavor to give each student a momentum in new directions, and motivation to pursue learning during the remain der of his life.

To the extent that breadth of cultural knowledge is one objective, the college can provide in each of its departments,

especially the liberal arts and sciences, courses of value within the department but also adapted to the needs of the nontechnical student and the part-time student. For example, Giardina proposed a course in political science devoted to the attainment of what he called liberal skills. He contended that the courses studied in the high schools ordinarily describe the political system as it exists, leaving the students with uncritical acceptance of the system and little understanding of how to become effective in politics. He proposed that the objectives in the course include understanding politics as power, its causes and consequences; as choices among competing claims; as structures and processes through which action is obtained; as values toward which to strive and purposes to be achieved; as change, good or bad; and as people who are involved and are affected.[13] Assuming that a primary aim of general education is to prepare students for their role as citizens, this type of course on politics would increase their understanding of the political process and their competence to participate. It would be equally of value to the student of political science, especially those who choose politics as a career.

Heinsohn proposed a course for engineers that would provide them with a broad understanding of technology. The objectives would be: 1) to identify the basic technological concepts that govern operations in engineering; 2) to understand the technological method that casts human needs as

technological problems; and 3) to analyze the impact technology has on cultural norms and values.[14] Such a course would provide an intellectual understanding through which future technicians and engineers would learn to use technology not only to make better bolts and bombs, but to promote human culture rather than to fragment, dissipate, or destroy it. A course that deals with the social implications of technology would also be of value to future business managers, government administrators, surgeons, and indeed all professional men and women as well as citizens in general, by developing in them a better comprehension of this technological age.

If the college accepts personal development as a goal, an example of an appropriate course is given by Montgomery College. The course is concerned with personal growth, and with increasing the ability to communicate effectively and work with other people. It is subordinated within the curriculum in psychology and intended for students in the health fields. However, all students are concerned with their personal well-being and their interpersonal relations. At Diablo Valley College in California, one of the most sought-after courses in the curriculum is one on interpersonal relations.

In addition to utilizing selected courses that are intended for students in specialized fields, a college can plan a variety of courses, each designed primarily for non-technical students. For example, the University Extension at the Univer-

sity of California, Berkeley, offered a course in "The Unfolding Universe." The teacher had trained himself to adapt the findings of scientific research to the level of understanding of the lay person. He used lectures, with blackboard illustrations, audio-visual aids, and discussions. The enrollees varied in age from 12 to 80. Some of them enrolled for credit, others did not. The course was highly successful, that is, successful in acquainting the enrollees with some of the latest theories and discoveries in space and in holding the interest of the group. Among other results, it induced many of the students to read books and articles on recent discoveries in astronomy.

This course covered only 16 hours of class time. It suggests the possibility of providing general education courses that offer as little as one hour of credit. Each course could examine a topic or problem, probing it in some depth. The comprehensive effect in covering several fields of knowledge can best be achieved by a mosaic of courses each having an enticing title and content. By giving the student some options, the program can be individualized. It does not matter that the student at this point in his learning does not get all of the knowledge that he should eventually know. It is better to whet his appetite than to overstuff him with facts that he will quickly forget.

An example that met these criteria was a course in science taught to nonscience students at Harvard. It was designed

around case studies. One case, for example, traced the history of the atom beginning with the experiments of Lavoisier and Priestley during which the first atom, oxygen, was identified and named. The case provided a vehicle through which to gain historical perspective about the growth of scientific knowledge, to become acquainted with the scientific method, and to see the interdisciplinary relationships of matter and energy.[15] An up-to-date version of this case might explore the problems raised by the release of atomic energy and the uses of nuclear power.

Turning to the social sciences, it is easy to depict a case on human rights. The beginning could be the Magna Carta, its content, the reasons for its origin, and its impact in revolutionizing the freedoms enjoyed by the common man. Relevant acts of Parliament--such as the law of habeas corpus which put a stop to the imprisonment of people without legal charges and a judicial trial, the elimination of religious persecution, and the establishment of the right to vote could be studied. In the same way, the long fight for human relations that preceded the adoption of the first ten amendments to the American Constitution would be analyzed to shed light on the significance of our own civil liberties. This case might conclude with discussions of the present-day rights of women, of blacks, and of the advocacy of human rights in our foreign policy. Of special significance, it would shed light on ways to effect social change.

As noted earlier, one of the pressing needs in America is a common set of values. The school and the college have superseded other social agencies in educating people in ethical concepts and for social responsibility. The community college is one of the institutions that has this role, and should participate in the search for values. No one course can do this job. Here again, consideration of values must be present in all courses and campus activities. However, in a course oriented to this problem, the student can analyze some of the issues and bring to bear on them the best wisdom from Western and Eastern thought that can be found. The significance of the effort to discover common values is not only domestic. The people of the world will not save themselves from catastrophe until they find values that serve as a basis for living and working together.

Another type of course might focus on inductive reasoning. This, too, is a function of all of college; however, a non-technical course that provides insights into methods of data gathering and processing as a basis for decisions could contribute to an understanding of the importance of reasoning by analysis rather than through bull sessions or by accepting the pronouncements of dogmatists. This understanding would innoculate against the effects of social pressures toward conformity in thought and action. A problem that involved field investigations but not weighted down with too many variables, and capable of solution with simple statistical procedures would

be necessary. This should not become a course in statistics, although it would give an elementary acquaintance with statistics as a mathematical tool--a tool the value of which is frequently overlooked by departments of mathematics. It would further the student's knowledge of the computer as a new intellectual tool.

For field investigations, as well as historical studies, Montgomery College is located within a geographical laboratory that is rich in potential. In the Atlantic corridor there exist problems relating to population, housing, commercial activity, transportation, government, health, recreation, land use, and a host of others. Many disciplines including aesthetics, sociology, economics, political science, architecture and engineering are involved, but on most problems interdisciplinary studies are needed.

The several illustrations above are interdisciplinary and their content is selected from the broad fields of the humanities, social sciences and sciences. Each has objectives relevant to its own problem, but a moment's reflection will show that they consider current issues in the light of past experience and knowledge, they involve ideas from both Western and other cultures, and they include information gathering and analyses that illustrate both historical and empirical methods. They require practice in both oral and written communication. They foster both intellectual and personal growth. Thus they satisfy the criteria of a curriculum in general education.

The illustrations are intended only as examples. Using the approach we have suggested it is possible to design a variety of courses that focus on general objectives. There is a technique through which to select and clarify the objectives of a course and choose subject matter and methods that will achieve them. The method involves using a cross-section chart with both vertical and horizontal columns. The vertical ones are used for analysis of objectives under the broad headings of knowledge, skills, and attitudes, with appropriate sub-objectives at the head of each column. On the horizontal axis the content titles relevant to the overall theme of the course can be inserted as sub-headings. At the interstices of the vertical and horizontal columns the more specific objectives to be achieved by study of the particular content should be listed. The cross-section chart thus becomes a worksheet by which to select, eliminate, order, and integrate objectives and content. A procedure of this kind is essential in designing courses or programs that are innovative. Incidentally, the specific objectives become the basis for evaluating the achievements of each student.[16] The worksheet is an analysis; it will be followed with the syllabus which is the synthesis.

The same technique is valuable to use when planning the whole program in general education. It is a devise for constructing a model. If an ideal plan is first projected, both in objectives and in content and experiences, it will provide a frame of reference from which a plan appropriate to the

Figure 1

GENERAL EDUCATION

Worksheet to Define Objectives and Plan Courses and Experiences

| COURSES AND EXPERIENCES | OBJECTIVES: Knowledge — Historical perspective | Knowledge — Cultural identity | Knowledge — Potentialities for self | Knowledge — Psychology of emotions | Knowledge — Etc. | Skills — Rational thinking |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Course A-- HUMAN RIGHTS | 1 Origins of civil liberties<br>2 Evolution of democracy<br>3 Four freedoms<br>4 Voting rights Act<br>5 International efforts today | 1 Heritage from Britain<br>2 Comparison with other cultures | 1 Women<br>2 Ethnic groups<br>3 Legal rights | 1 Nature of conflict | | 1 Historical analysis<br>2 Recognize and analyze issues |
| Course B | | | | | | |
| Course C | | | | | | |
| Others | | | | | | |

(Extend chart either direction as needed)

Step 1: Define and choose realistic objectives.
2: List array of possible courses and experiences.
3: Test 2 for relevance to 1, and develop a mosaic of courses.
4: Make selections for optimum results within limits of time and resources.
5: Using similar worksheet and procedures, design individual courses and experiences.
6: Group consideration and approval.
7. Work out a syllabus for each course; include plan for evaluation in relation to the objectives.

| | | | | Attitudes | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Community action | Interpersonal | Etc. | Value sensitivity | Social consciousness | Self discovery | Etc. |
| 1 Exerting group pressures<br>2 Techniques of Amnesty International | 1 Securing rights<br>2 Protecting rights | | 1 Rights of individuals<br>2 Meaning of freedoms<br>3 Nature of oppression | 1 Awareness of human struggles<br>2 Tolerance<br>3 Respect for others | 1 Place of individual in society | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |
| | | | | | | |

particular college's responsibilities and resources can be worked out. Individual courses can then be designed and fitted into the larger pattern. Figure 1 shows the format of the chart, on which are placed examples of objectives and of one course partially factored.

Thus to our question, can there be courses in the curriculum that are devoted to general education, the answer is "yes." The type we have envisaged would be appropriate for both full and part-time students, and to persons of all ages. Also available would be other courses that are departmentally oriented but which provide breadth of learning. In addition, the experiential component in education should be interwoven with the class instruction, and available through campus and off-campus experiences.

The colleges face a dilemma in assuring that each student experience overall development. Most colleges stipulate that any candidate for a degree must submit a component of general education. This obviously is a practical method--one that can easily be understood by everyone and administered by the college. If this plan is adopted by a college, we believe that the requirement should be designated as a segment of the total of credit hours, chosen from among courses and experiences that have general education objectives, leaving considerable freedom of choice to the student. The plan should strike a balance between the social need for broadly educated persons, and individual needs as perceived by the student and his counselors.

In other words, impose requirements but permit a degree of freedom in individualizing the education.

In theory, a better plan is to use persuasion rather than requirements; also to state the objectives as expectations to be achieved rather than as courses to be taken. This plan assumes effective counseling of the students and maintenance of an educational environment that promotes the objectives. Obviously, if the student sees the merit of an educational experience or the relevance of it to his own future life, he will accept it. This plan also involves evaluating the student's progress in relation to the defined objectives.

To assist in persuading students about their choices, it is important to title, describe, and publicize the courses and experiences in a manner to attract their interest--make them at least as attractive as Geritol in gaining health and happiness in life. Also this is the means of bringing the program to the attention of potential noncredit students.

There is a widespread assumption among college faculty and administrators that students are interested only in preparing for a job, and through earning more money obtain some of the pleasures they seek in their leisure time. This means to them that students will resist any requirement to take general education courses. This assumption needs examination. The Carnegie Council in 1975-76 surveyed college students. A large majority of those in community colleges thought that a well-rounded general education was important; that is 56%

checked "essential," 41% "fairly important," and only 3% labelled it "not important," Sixty percent consider themselves "an Intellectual," so presumably they have intellectual interests.[16] Montgomery College reports that 35% of its students are in the transfer/general education type of program. This agrees with the national pattern.

There is also the part-time student to consider. Some of them are taking courses to upgrade themselves vocationally or for re-entry into employment; but large numbers of the enrollees are interested in deriving a better understanding of themselves, and in recreation, public issues, and cultural enrichment. Many take courses they missed taking in college.

The conclusion we draw from these data is that there is motivation, some of it latent perhaps, among community college students to include general education as a part of the programs.

We cannot overemphasize the role of the faculty in general education. Are the faculty sufficiently motivated and knowledgeable themselves to deal with the kinds of educational problems envisaged in this paper?

College teachers are the products of graduate and technical programs, and are conditioned toward specialization. They are given salaries geared to the market for specialized services. They receive professional recognition, both on campus and among outside professional colleagues, on their standing in the specialization.

Graduate programs ordinarily do not prepare teachers for

the kinds of responsibilities we have assumed above. As a consequence, teachers of general education courses are usually borrowed from the specialized departments. Often they give watered-down courses from their specialized areas. They are uninterested in teaching them and their students become bored.

In spite of this situation, most faculty members give lip service to the kinds of social and individual objectives that we have been describing. They agree that students should be broadly educated, that society has problems to solve that require interdisciplinary knowledge and methods, that the college experience should facilitate personal development. It is these beliefs that need to be mobilized in support of a program that includes both breadth and depth.

It is essential that there be faculty commitment in offering a general education program. This means the following:

1) Those faculty who offer general education courses should be well motivated toward the objectives; should be concerned with and able to integrate knowledge; should prepare adequately for the class, laboratory and experiential work; and should feel that their teaching of general education is highly important--as important as any other they might be doing.

2) The faculty of the college generally should endeavor to coordinate the objectives of their specialized instruction with those in general education.

3) Students should receive counseling relating to general education objectives and courses equal to that received for vocational education.

4) Faculty in general education should receive incentives in rank, salary, and recognition equal to those available to specialists

What is needed is a campus tone supportive of general education. This is not easy to achieve. The academic world, in spite of its liberal arts tradition, is strongly set against it. However, the community college, among all the institutions of higher education, is in the best position to establish objectives consistent with the social and individual needs we have been describing. It is they who enroll the students at their most educable age and when they are most concerned about their future lives; it is they who attract the adults who seek more learning; it is they who aim to integrate their programs with the community's problems and needs. The community colleges have the best opportunity of any institution to raise the general level of expectations, cultural understanding, and values of all of the people.

Footnotes

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